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## STATISTICAL PUBLICATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT.

It is the purpose of this paper to correlate and present various facts concerning the different statistical publications of the Federal Government.\* Too little is known by the public of the great variety of publications of the general Government. The United States supports and maintains a vast printing establishment, from which it issues yearly thousands of volumes on as wide a range of subjects as that of books coming from any private publishing house in the country. It is a mistake to suppose that these publications consist only of routine reports of the various executive offices. The Government is yearly issuing a greater and greater number of publications, whose only *raison d'être* is their value as contributions to human knowledge. Of these last, statistical compilations form an important and valuable class. They can be best considered according to their subject matter.

### *The Federal Censuses :*

The regular decennial censuses taken by the Federal Government form the most extensive and valuable compilation of statistics that exists in the United States, if not in the world. Their well-known character renders unnecessary any extended comments here. Each census prior to the one just taken has shown a tendency to be more elaborate than the one preceding. With this increase in length and scope has certainly come a corresponding increase in the attention paid to the

\*Only the present statistical work of the Federal Government will be considered in this paper. The United States has in the past done some little for statistical science by paying the expenses of delegates to International Statistical Congresses and International Penitentiary Congresses, and in publishing a number of single statistical works. Congress has also encouraged statistical work by the purchase of a considerable number of copies of such works as Seybert's Statistical Annals 1818, Pitkins' Commercial Statistics of the United States 1818 and Watterson's and Van Zandt's Statistical Tables 1820.

requirements for the collection of statistics on a scientific basis. In addition to the final full reports, the Census Bureau issues as soon as possible "Compendiums" which contain tables showing summaries of results, which in many cases serve the same purpose as the more bulky quarto volumes. Results of the census are also announced, as soon as arrived at, through brief bulletins in pamphlet form. A large number of such bulletins for the eleventh census have already appeared.

### *Statistics of Commerce:*

All nations have found it advisable to keep as accurate a record as possible of statistics of trade and commerce. For this purpose the United States issues through the Bureau of Statistics of the Treasury Department two series of reports, entitled "Statistics of Commerce and Navigation" and "Internal Commerce." The first includes quarterly and annual reports on the commerce and navigation of the United States, and an annual list of merchant vessels. In addition to these the bureau issues monthly summaries of the imports and exports of the country in order to supply the demands of the public for early and frequent statistics of our foreign trade. That the delay required for compilation and printing may be avoided, the press is supplied with a statement of the total value of monthly imports and exports as soon as obtained from the custom officers. The annual report on commerce and navigation contains statistics of the amount and value of imports and exports in detail by countries and articles; statistics of immigration and emigration; the number and tonnage of vessels entered and cleared, and general information concerning the tonnage of steam and sail vessels, the number of vessels built in this country, etc. The Bureau of Statistics was created in 1866. Volumes on internal commerce have been published since 1876. They are compilations of statistics and general information concerning the internal commerce of the country, railroad and water transportation, etc.

A Bureau of Statistics also exists in the State Department. In August, 1842, Congress directed the Secretary of State to

issue annual reports on our commercial relations with foreign nations. These reports are based mainly on reports of consuls. Prior to 1880 they were issued only in annual "Commercial Relations." Since then they have been issued each month under the title of "Consular Reports." They contain statistics and general information relating to our commerce with foreign nations. Special consular reports are issued from time to time.

*Statistics of Production :*

In addition to the regular decennial censuses of production, the Federal Government collects and publishes through various bureaus statistics of the production of the most important classes of commodities. The Statistician of the Department of Agriculture publishes monthly and annually reports on the production of all agricultural products in this country. His report also includes statistics concerning the course of distribution, the cost of transportation, the rate of consumption, the range of prices, the wages of agricultural laborers, the production of foreign countries, etc. The first appropriation for the collection of agricultural statistics was made March 3, 1839, and amounted to \$1000. Agricultural affairs were then attended to by the Commissioner of Patents. The difficulties inherent in the task of collecting agricultural statistics prevent these reports from being accurate census reports of production. Their past history has, however, shown them to be close approximations to the precise amounts produced, and they are complete enough to perform their function of keeping the farmers and the public informed concerning the condition of agriculture, the movement of prices, etc. These statistics are based mainly on reports of numerous correspondents located in different sections of the country, verified whenever possible by collateral sources of information, as reports of State officers, boards of trade, and other bodies.

In 1883 the United States Geological Survey commenced the issue of annual reports on "The Mineral Resources of the United States." These give complete statistics of the amount

and value of each mineral mined or quarried during the year, and the movement in prices for each, and an estimate of the quantity of each mineral existing in this country. The United States Fish Commission has also published in a less complete way statistics of fishes and fisheries. The Director of the Mint under the Treasury Department issues an annual report on the production and consumption of gold and silver throughout the world.

### *Statistics of Education :*

The Bureau of Education, now under the Interior Department, was created in 1867. Its annual reports since then have been largely devoted to educational statistics. They are compiled largely from reports of State and local school officers, and registers and catalogues of scholastic institutions and other printed sources of information. They are very complete, and relate to foreign countries as well as the United States, showing the proportion of children of school age attending school, the number and resources of institutions for higher education, etc., etc.

### *Finance Statistics :*

The annual report of the Secretary of the Treasury embraces statistics on a wide range of financial subjects. This report embraces the reports of the various bureau officers under the department. The report of the Treasurer gives the receipts and expenditures of the United States, the condition of various funds and the amount of money in the Treasury.\* The report of the Director of the Mint shows the amount of money coined, the amount of gold and silver exported and imported, the stock of gold in the various countries of Europe, the value of foreign coins, etc. The report of this officer on the production and consumption of gold and silver has already been mentioned. The reports of the Commissioners of Internal Revenue and of Customs give the details of the collection

\*In 1886 the Treasury Department transmitted a valuable report to Congress, giving a statement of expenditures for public buildings, rivers and harbors, ports, arsenals, armories, and other public works since March 4, 1789. Senate Executive Document No. 196. 47th Congress.

of revenue from these sources. The report of the Comptroller of the Currency gives statistics of the number and condition of National Banks, State Banks and Savings Banks in the United States, and the amount of money in circulation. The report for 1873 contained the first general information relating to the condition of banking institutions other than national. Pursuant to an Act of that year, February 19, the Comptroller has since then collected information as far as obtainable, of all banks, State, savings, private, and loan and trust companies. The report of the Register gives the condition of the national debt and the details of the expenditures and receipts of the Government. For most questions concerning the expenditures of the Federal Government, the "Annual Letter" of the Secretary of the Treasury transmitting estimates of expenditures of the Government to Congress is the best source of information. This letter gives in detail the objects for which appropriations are required, the amount of the appropriation asked for the preceding year, the actual amount appropriated, reference to the Act authorizing each appropriation, and the reasons for appropriations for new purposes or objects.

#### *Statistical Abstracts :*

Congress has recognized the difficulty entailed in the search for statistics in the foregoing compilations, few being acquainted with their scope or methods of arrangement. To partially remedy this difficulty, the Chief of the Bureau of Statistics of the Treasury Department has been authorized to issue yearly a "Statistical Abstract," which shall contain in a condensed form summaries of the statistical information contained in Government publications. Reports of this character have been issued since 1878. They furnish the material for much of the information contained in year books and almanacs.

#### *Railroad Statistics :*

In 1888 the Interstate Commerce Commission commenced the publication of annual statistics of railroads in the United States. Only the reports for 1888 and 1889 have thus far

appeared. They promise to form one of the most valuable sets of the statistical publications of the general Government. These reports give in detail for each railroad in the United States its length, character and equipment, the amount of its capital, its income and expenditures in detail, the amount of fixed charges, as bonded indebtedness, and its relation to other roads, as for instance, whether an operating road or leased. These roads are grouped according to companies operating, thus showing exactly the roads included in each system. Attention is also given in them to the extent of traffic, the number of accidents, etc. Commencing with the second report, the statistician has introduced a new table, which he announces will be continued in succeeding reports, showing the changes which have taken place in the ownership of railways during the year. There is thus presented an accurate history of the railroad development and consolidation which is going on so rapidly in this country. The importance of this table will increase with each report.

#### *Statistics of Labor:*

The foregoing statistical works have been largely compiled in connection with the other routine work of the federal executive. In 1885 Congress established a purely statistical bureau named the Bureau of Labor, under the Interior Department. In 1887 the Bureau of Labor was created an independent department. The attention of this department is exclusively devoted to the collection of statistics concerning the condition of labor, except when especially directed by Congress to undertake a particular investigation. Congress has ordered this to be done but once ; though it is probable that in the future Congress will make greater use of this department for conducting special investigations. Hon. Carroll D. Wright, for seventeen years Chief of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor, has been Commissioner of Labor since the creation of the bureau. The publications of this department consist of five annual reports treating successively of (1) Industrial Depressions, (2) Convict Labor, (3) Strikes and Lock-outs, (4)

Working Women in Large Cities and (5) Railroad Labors and a special report on Marriage and Divorce. These are statistical works of the highest order of merit. That on Marriage and Divorce is probably the most complete and accurate collection of statistics relating to one subject that has ever been made. The next series of reports of this department, will be on the Cost of Production and Cost of Living of the laborers in the principal branches of industry in America, England and on the Continent of Europe. The department has been engaged on this investigation for a number of years, and its result will fill four or five volumes. The great value of this work is unquestionable. For the first time it will furnish us reliable data concerning a number of much debated questions, such as the relative advantages of America and Europe for the production of the chief staple commodities,\* the proportion in which wages enters into the cost of production in each country, the efficiency of labor in each, the condition of operatives, their earnings and expenses in detail, etc.

A summary of the foregoing shows that the United States Government issues fifteen distinct statistical publications. The general condition of the country is presented each decade by an elaborate census. The annual letter and report of the Secretary of the Treasury and the reports of the Comptroller of the Currency cover the subject of Federal, and in part, of State finance. In the important field of production, yearly statistics are presented of agriculture, mining products, fisheries, and of gold and silver both in this and in foreign countries. Three publications, the monthly and annual Reports on Foreign Commerce and Navigation, the annual Reports on Internal Commerce, and the monthly Consular Reports, give statistics of the commerce of the country. A special report covers fully statistics of railway transportation, and an independent department reports concerning statistics of labor. A statistical abstract summarizes to some extent government statistics.

\*The bearing of this on the tariff question is evident. See "Scientific Basis for Tariff Legislation" by Hon. Carroll D. Wright, *Journal of Social Science*, 1884.



The proposition has been frequently mooted to combine the various statistical bureaus into one department of statistics. I shall not attempt to discuss fully the advantages and disadvantages of such a plan. There would be something gained in a few directions, but much lost in others. Undoubtedly it would be advisable to have the taking of the census entrusted to a permanent department, such as already exists in the Department of Labor.

The advantages of such a union have been presented repeatedly, and it has been recommended by every one either engaged in or interested in statistical work. These advantages are illustrated in Massachusetts, where the taking of the decennial State census is entrusted to the State Bureau of Labor. Both the census and the labor reports of Massachusetts are unsurpassed in this country for accuracy and scientific presentation. Each service aids the other. Labor statistics are collected at the same time that the census is taken, and the permanent existence of a bureau of statistics furnishes a corps of expert statisticians for the census work, already familiar with the ground to be covered. A new machinery does not have to be erected each decade, and a new service educated at great expense, which at best can never equal in efficiency a permanent service. In the case of the United States it would do away with the necessity of taking the whole census the same year. Census figures of population and production could be taken each decade, while collateral investigations, such as of vital statistics, statistics of mortgage indebtedness, of local finances, etc., could be collected during intermediate years. The greater part of the force would then be constantly employed. There is little doubt that greater economy and efficiency would be thus secured.

Possibly also, it would be advisable to combine the Bureaus of Statistics which now exist under the Treasury and State Departments. But it is difficult to see how statistics of railways could be more advantageously collected than as at present through the Interstate Commerce Commission, or agricultural and mining statistics than by the departments of the Government devoted to these industries.

There is, nevertheless, a lack of uniformity and coördination between the different statistical bureaus which is to be regretted. Each bureau has been organized as circumstances have seemed to require. As a result there has been formed a system of statistical collection in many ways defective. In some fields exceptionally complete statistics are furnished, while on other subjects of equal or even greater importance, no information at all is collected. In the remainder of this paper I shall refer to a few fields that should be covered by statistical publications if we would render our system of Federal statistics complete.

It will be noticed that in the great divisions of productions, annual statistics are collected for each class except that of manufactured products. Recent years have witnessed a marked tendency on the part of the Federal Government to create separate departments to look after each class of industrial interests as for example the Agricultural Department for agriculture, the Fish Commission for fisheries, and the Bureau of Mines and Mining in the Geological Survey for the mineral industries. Manufactures alone have received no attention from the Federal Executive, however much they may have occupied the attention of late Congresses.

The collection of statistics of manufactories, to be sure, offers many difficulties, but not more than is offered in the collection of agricultural statistics, and a similar system of collection would be equally effective. The success attending the efforts of such associations as the American Iron and Steel Association and the National Wool Growers' Association to secure statistics of the production of iron and wool illustrates the feasibility and ease with which statistics of the principal articles of manufacture can be obtained.

The second gap in the Federal statistical system is that caused by the incomplete collection of statistics of transportation. Since 1888 we have had adequate statistics concerning railroad transportation. The reasoning which applies to the necessity for the collection of railroad statistics applies with equal force to the collection of statistics of other transportation companies, such as those engaged in transportation by water, express

companies, palace and sleeping car companies, telegraph companies, etc. These statistics should be collected by the statistician of the Interstate Commerce Commission. The Interstate Commerce Commissioners in their last annual report urge that the provisions of the Interstate Commerce Act be extended to companies engaged in transportation by water, and the statistician desires that all companies concerned in any way in Interstate Commerce should be required to make reports to the Commission similar to those now required of railroad companies. This latter suggestion at least should be adopted. Were this done much assistance would be furnished us for the determination whether these companies should come under the Interstate Commerce Act or not, or the advisability of the Government organizing a postal telegraph system. Such statistics are also very easy of collection. Printed forms of reports are now furnished each railroad company, which the company is required by law to fill out and return to the Commission. Absolute uniformity is thus secured. Prof. Henry C. Adams has demonstrated that a very valuable collection of railroad statistics can be secured in this way at a small expense. It is scarcely necessary to dwell upon the importance of securing this class of statistics. Prof. Adams in a paper read before the Washington meeting of the American Economic Association, 1890, on statistics as an aid in the correction of corporate abuses, showed their great practical value in the adjustment of the relations between corporations and the Government. The proper management of the finances of these corporations is of very nearly equal importance to the general public to that of the Government finances. Complete publicity of their accounts would go a long way towards the correction of many abuses.

There are other important fields in which the Government has as yet done nothing—fields in which foreign central governments have done exceptionally elaborate work. Of these the two most important are statistics of crime and vital statistics.

The Attorney-General of the United States, in his last report as head of the Department of Justice, recommends

the creation of a bureau of statistics of prisoners and prisons. In his report for 1889 the Attorney-General says :

“ It is urged with much force that a prison bureau should be established in the Department of Justice, where could be gathered, collated and recorded in a permanent form the criminal statistics of the United States. It is impossible at the present time to find any office or bureau where information concerning crime and criminals in this country can be obtained. The criminal statistics of the United States cannot be compared with those of other nations. The advantages of such a bureau to the Government, State, county and municipal officers, and the public generally would be invaluable. This prison bureau could be made the central office of the Bertillon system of measurements for the identification of criminals. It is believed the States and Territories would co-operate and heartily endorse such a plan, and it would undoubtedly meet with the favor of the wardens and superintendents of the several penitentiaries. I earnestly urge an appropriation necessary to carry out the above recommendations.”

The National Prison Reform Association has repeatedly adopted resolutions favoring the establishment of a bureau of this character. This is a subject of no ordinary importance, and it is one upon which little or no reliable information now exists for the whole country. Such questions as the influence of our foreign-born population on the prison population, the influence of education, of intemperance and of insanity upon crime, the question of hereditary tendencies towards crime, etc., are questions which should be answered as soon as possible.

An equal necessity exists for vital statistics. There is a remarkable lack of either statistical compilations or of literature of any kind bearing upon this class of statistics in this country. A number of States (notably Massachusetts), collect statistics of births and deaths through State Boards of Health and Registers ; and the reports of health officers of most of our large cities are of great value. What is lacking is a cen-

tral bureau to correlate these efforts. A Federal bureau would be of great service did it make no collections itself, but devote its entire attention to the summarizing and presentation of material contained in State and municipal health officers' reports. Congress created in 1878 a National Board of Health, which, however, has never exhibited any vitality. This Board might be revived, and possibly made a permanent bureau under the Interior Department, and the collection of vital statistics intrusted to it. Foreign powers have attained a high degree of perfection in the collection of vital statistics. The long series of reports of the Registrar General of Great Britain contributes a fund of information of which Englishmen may well be proud.

In the extension of its statistical labors the Federal Government should bring one consideration prominently forward. A feature of its work should be its co-operation with State and municipal officers. It is justly held that the States should bear their proportion of the burden. In many cases the States are in a better position to collect statistics than is the Federal Government. A fair proportion of the States are already doing considerable work in the collection of statistics. Twenty-three States have bureaus of labor. Thirty have boards of health, and at least seventeen of these collect statistics of births, deaths, and marriages. Thirty require reports from railroad companies, ten from banking institutions, etc. Reports of State Commissioners of prisons, agriculture, etc., also contain statistics of more or less value.

Central bureaus at Washington could be made the medium through which these disconnected results could be brought together, and presented in an available shape. The Federal bureaus now existing are doing something in this way. The Bureau of Mines and Mining and the Agricultural Department make considerable use of State publications. The Department of Labor is now engaged in the preparation of a topical digest and index of the one hundred and forty reports of State labor bureaus, and a digest of State laws relating to labor.

The establishment of national bureaus is markedly effective in improving the quality of similar work of the States. They are of the greatest service in introducing uniform methods of statistical presentation. The superior work of the United States Department of Labor has furnished a model for the States to copy. The Interstate Commerce Commission has been very successful in its efforts to secure this result.\* State Commissioners have changed their forms of reports required of companies and of the financial year covered by their reports to conform to that of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

The day has now long passed when it is necessary to insist upon the importance of accurate statistics illustrating the resources of a nation or the condition of its citizens. Each advance in civilization renders social and economic conditions more complicated, and increases the need for systematizing information through statistical compilations. There are indications of a development of a statistical science in this country. Let us hope that the Government will aid in every way the furtherance of this much-to-be-wished-for result.

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\*See address by Prof. H. C. Adams on Uniformity in Railway Statistics, at the First Annual Convention of Railway Commissioners 1889, also appendix to his first report on Railway Statistics 1888.